

The Girl Who Triumphed

Ole André Undbekken



A Master's Thesis presented to the Department of
Literature and European Languages

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Synopsis

This thesis explores some of the basic principles of the modern romance, with particular emphasis on the paranormal romance. With the *Twilight Saga* as an example, in the first chapter, this thesis explores how the feminist reading of the paranormal romance can be seen as too simplistic, and in the case of *Twilight* altogether wrong.

By looking at feminist criticism of the novels, exemplified by Anna Silver, we find that much of the rhetoric used is based on fear, or a reading that is too shallow. When looked at as a paranormal romance, these readings make very little sense, as the paranormal romance does not really allow it. When in addition we look at one way of how the vampire plays into the story, we find that if we follow the constraints of the genre, this particular paranormal romance cannot really be seen as carrying a message that women are subordinate at all.

When we in the second chapter explore how the vampire can be seen from two additional sides, we see that the *Twilight Saga* is a very complex story. The first of these two being that the vampire can be seen as harbouring the fear of our age, which is the idea of perfection we can never attain, but we are made to want it. That the *Twilight Saga* particularly targets women only accentuate that this idea of perfection is especially aimed at women. When our third look at the vampire reveal that they might be read as Mormon, and finally take a look at what Bella has to sacrifice to become not only a perfect creature, but a Mormon one as well, it is evident that Mormonism is a faith where women can never be as great as the men. No matter what they sacrifice. The *Twilight Saga* may therefore be read as anti-Mormon because of the unattainable, male, perfection women must die to achieve.

Foreword and Acknowledgment

This journey has been interesting, and it is with apprehension that I hand this thesis in. As this is supposedly the final part of my formal education, unless I should choose otherwise, it is also a time for me to look back, although I will spare the reader the details, I will say there have been ups and downs over the last few years, but I am very pleased I am nearing the end of it and feel that I will look back and say I did alright, and spent my student days well enough.

Finally I will give my thanks and appreciation to my fiancée, Cicilie, who has given me the time I've needed to complete this work, and to my supervisor, Rebecca Scherr, for being honest with me throughout the whole journey.

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Introduction

Although Meyer herself has put forth the argument that it was never her intention to forth any argument for, or against, Mormonism, I believe that her text can be read as criticising Mormonism. Therefore, my thesis starts off with a paradox, where the author and her text can be seen to tell two different stories. I will spend a little time in my first chapter simply to explain on what basis I can claim that her words may mean different things, and of how the feminist reading of her texts, and my reading is equally valid from the beginning.

Although, in the end, my reading might also be considered a feminist reading of the *Twilight Saga*, I will make the distinction between the feminist reading and my reading throughout the thesis for two reasons: one, it is the easiest, and two, because most of the feminist readings of *Twilight* are in agreement that *Twilight* is teaching young women to be subordinate, whereas I think the opposite.

In the first chapter, I take a look at how the rules of the paranormal romance and the feminist reading are not compatible. I am not saying that the feminist reading doesn't have its merits. In fact, I am going to argue several of their points later on. However, ultimately, the feminist reading is missing the point, and I am going to show that during the first chapter, through the rules laid down by the genre. Therefore, the first chapter holds a vital importance to this thesis, otherwise it cannot be said that the *Twilight Saga* does the opposite of what its critics believe, which is to criticise Mormon patriarchal society.

Whenever I cite one of the four books all written by Meyer, I will only write the name of that book in italics, and then write the page number. The books will be found individually under Meyer, Stephenie, in the bibliography. Furthermore, *Twilight* might refer to the whole saga when appropriate, and simply to the one book with the same name when appropriate.

When referring to the Quileute natives, I will mostly say the Wolves, and not Werewolves, that the films have made them into, as they are not actually werewolves in the novels.

It is my argument in chapter one that there are some rules in the paranormal romance that the *Twilight Saga* follows, which makes it impossible to view the *Twilight Saga* as a text that is supposed to uphold patriarchal dominance. I will do this by first presenting what the

romance actually is, and some of its background, with reference to the fairy tale. Then I will give the reader a short summary of some of the criticism against the romance, before I take a deeper look at why that criticism against the romance in general, and also against the *Twilight Saga* is misplaced.

I will do this by examining the role of the vampire, and show how Edward's controlling behaviour cannot be seen as abusive patriarchal dominance, but rather as strict rules and exercises for him to control his emotions and also how his need for Bella can be split into his thirst for her blood, and his sexual desire. Then, I will argue that this follows the exact hallmark of the romance, and must therefore be interpreted as such.

I will then move on to look at further criticism, which includes Bella's passivity, marriage and lack of choices. I will attempt to prove that Bella actually has a choice. Although that choice is also limited by the genre, which is that Bella and Edward are going to marry, her demands also win through.

Chapter two will first look at the vampire as harbouring the fear of his age, and what fear that might be in the case of the contemporary society and in the *Twilight Saga*. This is closely connected to the next subject where Bella is seen as representing women in general. Although not everyone identify with Bella, or even like her, that does not mean that the character is not built on the purpose of trying to represent everyone. How she appears is also especially targeted at women.

Then, we will take another, and final, look at the vampire, and discuss whether we may read them as Mormons, and set that up against the fact that Bella is the most believable antagonist in her own story. The fact that Bella has to kill herself to achieve not only the perfection symbolised by vampirism in the *Twilight Saga*, but also to become a Mormon, criticises both contemporary society and Mormon society.

Chapter 1

1.1 The (Paranormal) Romance

The paranormal romance is the fastest growing subgenre of the romance, and although often criticised “These novels [the romance], are the most popular of all genres of fiction” (Lee 52). Perhaps because of its status as pop literature, there is relatively little to find on romantic fiction, and even less on the paranormal romance. This thesis will stick to the paranormal romance, as much as possible, which has received an increased interest since the publication and film adaptation of the *Twilight Saga*. In this first chapter, the *Twilight Saga* will be discussed on the basis of being a paranormal romance. This point of this passage is to make a simple foundation for what the paranormal romance is.

The basis for the romance is simple: “[...] romance is a genre in which overwhelming, uncontrollable desire meets an obstacle that prevents its realization” (Stromberg 220). The characters simply can’t stop loving each other, and there is the happily ever after ending, which is inescapable because of the genre. “Many criticisms of romance novels are based primarily on its generic constraints; critics argue that these novels cannot challenge the existing patriarchal structure, because they end with the establishment or reunion of a heterosexual married pair” (Lee 54). This, I will strongly argue against. In fact, in this thesis I will argue that there’s a strong connection between *Twilight* as a paranormal romance, and feminism that speaks against the label of upholding the patriarchal dominance the romance has been criticised of doing. Because most of the criticism of the *Twilight Saga* is feminist I actually have to argue against this reading to have the foundation needed to create my own arguments.

It is not that there aren’t many things the feminist reading points out that are absolutely true, but the things they point out are often missing the point. One example, which will be discussed later, is Edward’s controlling behaviour, and how he may be seen as more of

a father to Bella than her actual father. Both might be seen as true, but, there are reasons for both, which will be discussed later, where the feminist reading is missing the point.

First, we are going to see that the foundation of both my reading and the feminist reading is placed on ambiguous grounds. Then we move on to what the critics points out that make *Twilight* unable to challenge the patriarchal structure, before we in turn look at why I feel they're wrong in terms of how the genre works. This chapter ends with the vampire and Edward, where we discuss why he acts so dominantly and why his actions are not condemned in the books.

1.2 The intention of the author

The intentions Stephenie Meyer had when she wrote *Twilight*, is a topic that – if we are to believe her words – can never truly be discovered. ”Almost everything that went into *Twilight* was unconscious” (Meyer, Stephenie “A Conversation with Stephenie Meyer”). Does that mean she didn’t *mean* anything by what she wrote? Or does it mean that it’s up to the interpreter to freely infer any meaning upon the work of this author? Although there is a lot of debate on the subject of the author, we are not going to delve into that in this thesis, but it is highly improbable that she, consciously, or unconsciously meant absolutely nothing.

We have her words above. With those, we may infer that if there is a meaning behind her text she didn’t consciously intend. As it is my argument of this thesis that the *Twilight Saga* actually argues against Mormonism, it makes sense that Meyer hides behind the unconsciousness, because she can never then be arrested for meaning something that can be seen to go against her church. Feminist reading of these books – these will be described in detail later – have the opposite understanding of these texts. We arrive then at a place where both readings may be true, because if Meyer is telling the truth when she says that any meaning was unconscious, we can never truly know for certain. If she is lying, we must assume that she actually meant something by her writing, but as long as she’s not willing to speak, we are also left with guessing. The point here is that Stephenie Meyer has given a very clear indication that she doesn’t want anyone to know whether or not she actually meant anything specific by her words. My reading of these books may therefore in principle be equally relevant as the feminist reading despite going in the opposite direction.

1.3 The Feminist Reading

Feminism has a long, diverse, and confusing history. In fact, the word feminism itself has been frowned upon even by women who we'd assume it to be appropriate to call feminists. In many ways, it has been, and might still be, a derogatory term used in political, social, and in this case, literary situations. However, in this thesis the term will only be used when referring to the reading that is the opposite of my own. Although, as already mentioned, my reading might also be considered feminist; the distinction between the feminist reading and my reading makes it easier to discuss. In addition, there might be several feminist readings of the *Twilight Saga*, but I will in this passage of chapter one present the principles of the feminist reading I will be arguing against.

Feminism never started out as a movement, but as an idea based on the social, economical and political rights of women, or the lack of them to be precise, where women would sometimes stick their heads out of the door to shout into the public sphere reserved for men that women had no rights in this world, and that they should have them too. The "shouting" they did was with the pen, because that was how to get heard back in the 17th and 18th century. Two of the oldest and most famous names are Mary Astell (1666-1731), and Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797). The obstacle, and also the cause for the rise of the word "feminism", was the men and the masculine, because a woman who was sharp, witty and bold, was seen as a manly, and not as a woman, or feminine. "Any woman who tries to act like a human being, Wollstonecraft remarks, risks being labelled 'masculine', and she admits that the fear of being thought unwomanly runs very deep in her sex" (Walters 35).

Having the above as background, the feminist critic is therefore set on finding within literature the same boundaries that these women were faced with in real life. That means trying to answer the question of: what exactly is feminine, and what boundaries does the literature place upon women that constrict them to their supposed place in the social hierarchy? Basically, that means any literature that in some way confines women to roles that have been seen as typically female, like cooking and cleaning, or has dominant male characters as opposed to dominant female characters, are seen as a part of the larger literary canon that is constructed to keep women in their place. In other words, all literature where men have power over women is seen as indoctrinating women that men should be superior.

There are, of course, a number of literary themes and subjects where the differences of masculinity and femininity are played out. For example, women up until the mid 20th century, or a little later, were supposed to be at home, watch the kids, clean the home while the men were supposed to take care of the family financially, and the man was seen as the head of the family. So, if there is any resemblance of this in literature, the feminists will point it out and say that the woman is trapped in this institution of being the housewife.

Another theme is the active/passive dichotomy, where men are seen as the active, and women as the passive. This theme permeates a number of literary subjects, like sexuality, gender and politics. Literature where the male is seen to take action in any of these three subjects and where females are seen to be passive, are again a part of the larger whole that keeps women in their place and strengthens the patriarchal hierarchy.

By intertextually drawing feminist life from the paradigmatic heroine and plot of *Jane Eyre*, Meyer prepares readers for the conversion of a character who at first embodies “feminine” passivity and a central story that is strictly neogothic romance until that point when heroine and narrative confront the problem of women’s sexual vulnerability and resolve [...] tensions between female subjectivity and heterosexual desire [...] (Deffenbacher and Zagoria-Moffet 32).

The romance, which the *Twilight Saga* is here an example of, will fall into this category relatively easily, but only on the surface. It is my argument, that the feminist approach to this text is wrong, because of the structure of the genre, which will be discussed in further detail later.

A theme that permeates much of the themes described above is biological determinism. “Biological determinism presupposes a pervasive picture of sex and considers that biology grounds and justifies social norms” (Moi 20). However much Moi argues against this view in her book: *What is a Woman?*, one cannot help but feel that this view is absolutely alive in much of social thinking, and in particular, is evident in the romance genre, and accentuated in the paranormal romance, as is evident in *Twilight* in particular. For example, men are generally stronger and faster than women, and this has been elevated in the saga by making them into vampires and wolves that are unnaturally quick and strong. Also, Bella’s physical skills have been toned down quite a lot, making her clumsy, uncoordinated and terrible at sports. In other words, whether we agree or not with biological determinism, we must accept that it plays a strong part at the foundation of the story we here examine.

“Romance novels with the “love at first sight” motif problematize this by suggesting that the heroine is always already loved by the hero, and paranormal romances featuring alternate worlds or supernatural species often exacerbate this issue with their common use of destined romantic partners” (Lee 58). In other words, the female character can be seen as unable to choose any other suitor, because the male character is so in love with her. In the case of *Twilight* that is absolutely true. Although Bella loves Jacob, to an extent, she cannot be with him instead of Edward. Snow White and Cinderella have no choice either, and there is not even any other suitor in their stories at all.

Perhaps one can write the “love at first sight” off as only a literary device used to propel the story in a given, predictable direction – as indeed it does –, but from the point of view of feminism, this might be seen as problematic, because again the heroine is left without the possibility of choosing; she *must* love him. This is not untrue in the *Twilight Saga*, where the hapless Bella just has to choose Edward. After all: “[...] romance is a genre in which overwhelming, uncontrollable desire meets an obstacle that prevents its realization” (Stromberg 220), and then the protagonists overcome that barrier. I will later argue that this view is not clear cut in the *Twilight Saga*, and I therefore have to emphasise that I am now laying the foundation of the feminist reading.

“The novels’ gender ideology is ultimately and unapologetically patriarchal” (122), Silver claims. She points at several themes in the saga, including family and the metamorphosis, but puts more weight on the fact that it’s only after Bella has given birth and is married she becomes truly powerful, and beautiful, which is very true; it happens in that order in the story, but as I will argue later, motherhood, and even marriage carry only secondary importance.

Edward is accused of being a typical dominant male that tries to control his woman, and even play the role of Bella’s father, as many critics (Silver included) argue, and in many ways this is true. He admits to watching her sleep at night, he follows her around and he tries to control her friendship with Jacob. At one point where Bella has visited Jacob without Edward’s “consent” he is at her tail the second she’s out of Quileute lands. “It came out of nowhere. One minute there was nothing but bright highway in my rearview mirror. The next minute, the sun was glinting off a silver Volvo right on my tail” (*Eclipse* 131).

On the one hand, we have the mutual distrust of the two groups (the vampires and the wolves), and Edward blames his controlling behaviour on this distrust, but, on the other hand, it becomes increasingly clear that he is jealous. “Moments such as these [Edward’s dominant,

and paternal, behaviour towards Bella] are behind the feminist concern about gender roles that the novel raises, as Edward is exaggeratedly more active and confident than the generally passive, insecure Bella” (Silver 125). I will take up this subject again under the heading: The Third Face of the Vampire, where the patriarchal dominance in this novel and the clear connections between the Cullens and the Mormons will be examined. For now, it is enough to point out that this is the feminist criticism of the *Twilight Saga*, and that the things they point at, are correct in many ways.

The paranormal romance has a lot in common with the fairy tale. Usually, both the romance and the fairy tale revolve around the binaries: “young/adult, male/female, and low-status/high-status” (Lee 57). In the case of *Twilight*, Bella is much younger than Edward, and Edward is way above Bella on the social ladder¹. However, Edward is no more experienced with love than Bella is which makes them both children in a sense. “By a novel’s end, however, both protagonists have been repeatedly tested and become adult, high-status community members who are appropriate mates for each other” (Lee 58). The point being that the fairy tale usually ends up with the two of them living happily ever after. The romance is no different, and neither is the *Twilight Saga*. Perhaps the most important part of this journey is the ending, where the two marry.

It is also true that the fairy tale focuses on female beauty. The paranormal romance also falls into this trap, where the beauty of the protagonist is actually a central theme. Bella holds a remarkable similarity with Snow White and Cinderella. Bella’s even described as a person resembling Snow White, with her ivory skin and dark hair. Although the intention of the author might have been to make Bella look more like a vampire than a human, and therefore foreshadow her transformation, the effect is actually that of putting Bella in the position of a traditional female, whose only hope and wish in the world is that the prince sees her, and wants her.

Additionally, Bella is consistently characterised throughout the saga as clumsy, uncoordinated, terrible at sports, unlucky, and a magnet for trouble. This in turn makes her the typical damsel in distress whose only function is to be saved by the strong, masculine hero. In a rather amusing article by Margaret Kramar: “The Wolf in the Woods: Representations of “Little Red Riding Hood” in *Twilight*”, she compares the story of Bella to that of Little Red Riding Hood (LRRH) in two different versions of LRRH. We are not going to go into the text beyond a short incorporation of her main point because Kramar admits that: “Although the

¹ See “The First Face of the Vampire”

Little Red Riding Hood motif is very pervasive in popular American culture, it is impossible to measure or quantify the influence it may have had on Meyer's artistic process, unless she were to directly reference it" (15). However, it is interesting how she not only compares Bella with LRRH, but also compares Edward with the wolf.

Although it masquerades as a teenage girl's obsession with a brooding and mysterious vampire, lurking beneath the veneer of Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* is the ageless dialectic of the helpless female devoured by the predatory male. Whether as Bella she succumbs to the charming Edward Cullen or as Little Riding Hood to the rapacious wolf, the result is the same: by corporally consuming her through rape or marriage, the voracious male destroys her (Kramar 15).

Edward doesn't rape Bella, but he does marry her. It's discussable whether or not the marriage between the two may be considered voluntary. This is a topic which will be further discussed later, but from the perspective of Kramer, which is in agreement with the feminist reading, the male has the control and it is he who wants the marriage. Because he gets what he wants, the feminist critics argue that this is a sign of patriarchal dominance.

There are also several more examples of traits the fairy tale and the romance have in common, some of which will be addressed later in this thesis. This connection to the fairy tale will be taken up again in chapter two. However, this strong connection to the fairy tale is something that exacerbates the idea that women have no choice, and that the men are in complete control. In addition, Edward's abusive behaviour is also a strong point of the feminist criticism, which will be discussed below.

1.4 The First Face of the Vampire

The vampire is one of the most lasting, memorable, versatile, and adaptable villains in literature. It is curious that this is Meyer's choice for a romance character, when its predecessors are murderous rapists at best. In this First Face of the Vampire, the background of the vampire is going to be examined, and what that background brings with it into this new character, and story, in terms of desire.

Without entering into the contemporary vampire's most influential predecessor overly much, we are going to focus on one thing, and that is the lustfulness. We are, of course, talking about Dracula.

Dracula by Bram Stoker, first published in 1897 is *the* most inspirational vampire story, at least until the present. If you ask me which vampire is the first that springs to mind when the word "vampire" is spoken, Dracula is the top of the list. As I believe he is for many of us, although a great number of "relatives" are available to us through books, movies and television. True Blood, Vampire Diaries, Twilight, and Buffy the Vampire Slayer, are only a few of those easily attainable stories where vampires hold important roles, if not harbouring *the* main role of the story. But *Dracula* will always hold a special position.

Dracula has since its conception always been popular "Having never once been out of print, it has had an impact on twentieth-century popular culture that has proved little short of phenomenal" (Rogers V-VI). Hundreds of films have been based on this Count, and it "[...] has been translated into forty-three more languages" (Rogers same page).

Dracula is because of this the most well known vampire story there is. Although never mentioned directly by Meyer, there are so many similarities between the vampires in *Twilight* and Dracula, that there can be no mistake that they share a common background, and it is this background we are going to illuminate.

Dracula plays the role of a rapist. In the scenes where Lucy is being fed upon, Dracula is an eerie character. We see several things that he can do, for example how he turns into fog, or a bat, and how he commands a wolf to do his bidding. But the actual blood drinking is not shown to us. Dracula comes into Lucy's bedroom and while she is completely unaware of what he's doing to her, he bites her neck and drinks her blood. The victim is not a willing participant; she's often hypnotised, as is the case with both Lucy and Mina, and the act of

drinking blood is a pervasive one where the vampire has to penetrate the victim's skin. The drawing of blood is also a typical literary symbol of rape, and the loss of virginity.

The vampires in *Twilight* follow this same pattern, although their powers lay elsewhere. They don't turn into fog, or animals, or command wolves. Instead they are super strong, super fast, and "[...] totally gorgeous [...]" (Anna Kendrick). All vampires in *Twilight* share these characteristics, in addition that they sparkle in sunlight, but they can be divided into two types. We have the nomad, murderous rapist group (which the Volturi is a part of although they live permanently in one place), and the vegetarian group (which we will only refer to as the Cullens, although the Denali are a family in their own right).

The first group will for short be called nomads (nomad, murderous rapist group). They have red eyes and live off the killing of humans for their blood. The similarities they share with Dracula are most striking. Although Dracula turned his victims into evil creatures like himself when they die, the vampires in *Twilight* have a choice whether to turn them, or kill them. However, the act of feeding is closely the same. In both cases the vampires bite, most preferably in the neck, and in both cases it might be considered rape. The victim is unwilling, and the act is pervasive and draws blood. The main difference between *Twilight* and *Dracula* on this aspect is the (lack of) discrimination based on gender. Dracula hunts women only, whereas the *Twilight* vampires are not as picky and happily kill males for food.

The Cullens live off of animals' blood, and therefore do not harm humans. That does not mean they don't want to. If we look at Edward as an example of the bloodlust the Cullens do have, we find two interesting facts about Edward: one, he is actually a very lustful character, and two: much of his controlling behaviour can be explained away by a need for self-control.

Edward definitely comes through the window, on multiple occasions, but he doesn't draw Bella's blood when he's there. There are several separate incidents we may look at to describe Edward's lust for blood, and Bella, but we are only going to look at two of them. The importance of these two scenes is that we can here make a very clear distinction between the act of feeding and sexual desire, although it isn't clear cut. The fact that we can do precisely that, means that Meyer has made (at least this group of) her vampires be something else than what vampires have "originally" been. When sex and food is separated, we can, not only understand Edward better, but we can also set his character up as a more natural part of the romance story, than he otherwise would have been.

First, we have the scene where Edward abstains from intercourse with Bella. She clearly wants him, and he wants her, but he is afraid to lose control and kill her. Edward is extremely careful lest he should harm Bella. "And he took my face in his hands again. [...]. He hesitated – not in the normal way, the human way. Not the way a man might hesitate before he kissed a woman, to gauge her reaction, [...]. Edward hesitated to test himself, to see if this was safe, to make sure he was still in control of his need" (*Twilight* 282). Edward has learnt that his thirst for Bella's blood is beyond anything he has ever felt before, but here he is testing to see if he has control over himself. Control enough to kiss her, without killing her. There is, however, two ways of reading this scene, which makes it highly arbitrary what exactly is meant with the word "need". If by need, it's exclusively meant his need to feed on Bella's blood, then in this scene is quite innocent as to the more sinister counterpart: is his need sexual? If we can place upon the word "need" an emphasis on the pervasiveness of the act of feeding to such an extent that we can talk about rape in the same sense as we can in *Dracula*, then Edward is trying very hard not to rape her. Will we then look at this scene differently? Edward shows that he is adamant in his decision of not wanting to hurt Bella, in either of the two meanings of the word. Even when Bella more or less attacks him, in reaction to his kiss (same page), his control remains adamant. In this scene alone, one can argue for both sides of the coin, and one cannot say that there is a difference between sexual intercourse and the act of feeding.

However, when a few pages later, Bella and Edward again are alone, and they are discussing human/vampire desires, Bella asks: "'Well, do you find me attractive, in *that* way, at all?'" (*Twilight* 311), to which he replies: "'I may not be a human, but I am a man," [...]" (same page), it becomes clearer that Edward too, is not really thinking of biting her. He's interested in her sexually, in a human way – or in the normal man/woman way. It is clear here that he doesn't really feel that the bite, the breaking of skin, and the bloodsucking, is a sexual experience, which suggests that there's a difference in the *Twilight Saga* between actual sexual intercourse, and the act of feeding.

The second scene is where Edward tells Bella that he has killed people before for blood. Here the two characters, Bella and Edward, find themselves in the Cullens' house. Edward takes her on the grand tour and relates the family history. He tells her of how Carlisle found himself going from a clerk who was hunting vampires, to being one himself and how he was so appalled by himself that he eventually discovered he could live off of animal's blood. He then moves on to his own rebirth as a vampire in 1918. "'Well, I had a typical bout

of rebellious adolescence – about ten years after I was... born [...]. I wasn't sold on his life of abstinence, and I resented him for curbing my appetite. So I went off on my own for a time" (*Twilight* 342). For us, that means we have a clear indication that Edward has killed humans for food, and rather than being appalled, Bella is curious and urges him to go on, which he does: "It took me only a few *years* [my emphasis] to return to Carlisle and recommit to his vision. I thought I would be exempt from the... depression... that accompanies a conscience. Because I knew the thoughts of my prey, I could pass over the innocent and pursue only the evil. If I followed a murderer down a dark alley where he stalked a young girl – if I saved her, then surely I wasn't so terrible" (*Twilight* 343). Here there are several things we can put our finger on.

Firstly, it took him *years* to come back, which might suggest that there was a part of it he enjoyed, even though he makes no attempt to hint at it. He might not have enjoyed the killing, but he certainly must have enjoyed the feast, which again points towards him as a lustful character at heart.

Secondly, he was trying hard to rationalise his murders to himself. Even though he knew he was only doing what his species was supposed to do, he felt there was something ethically wrong about it.

Thirdly, if we look at this scene from a rape point of view – that the biting is sexual, then there is something unmistakably homoerotic about this one cannot overlook. As this is the only time and place Edward talks about his dark past, we can only speculate. However, there are a few things we get to know. Firstly, he went off on his own [...] about ten years after I was . . . born [...]. I wasn't sold on his life of abstinence, and I resented him for curbing my appetite. [...]" and he explains this as a "[...] typical bout of rebellious adolescence" (*Twilight* 342). It's not abnormal for teenagers to experiment with others of the same sex, but what he is doing to them can hardly be called experimentation. However, this is a romance between Edward and Bella, and irrelevant of the author's intentions, it falls pretty loudly into the hetero normative category where homoeroticism has little, or no, place.

The "need" Edward has, also makes him extremely careful. If we look at this one scene in particular where we can clearly see Edward's struggle, we might understand, in part, some of his actions later. This is where Edward nearly kills Bella in a full classroom, and the following conversation with on the subject. First: "Just as I passed, he suddenly went rigid in his seat. He stared at me again, meeting my eyes with the strangest expression on his face – it was hostile, furious" (*Twilight* 23). Those who have read further know that it's her smell that

makes him act like this. It's a sudden overpowering lust for her blood. Bella is spot on when she intuitively believes it's something that he smells he's reacting to. "He was leaning away from me, sitting on the extreme edge of his chair and averting his face like he smelled something bad" (same page). What Bella doesn't understand is why, and she falsely assumes that *she* smells bad, while it's exactly the opposite. She smells good, and in this case: mouth-watering. She also notices that he "[...] continued to sit so still it looked like he wasn't breathing" (*Twilight* 24). Again, the reader knows that he probably isn't breathing. If she really smells as good as the scene and their later conversation suggests it was probably a smart move for him not to breathe, as he then probably can't smell her so well.

The underlying theme in this scene is lust. Edward has an almost unquenchable thirst for her blood. Later he describes his lust for her by the words: "'Yes, you are *exactly* my brand of heroin'" (*Twilight* 268). Edward is so taken by Bella's scent that he can hardly control himself. Here, we have a clear situation where the vampire instincts are running amok, and it's only by pure willpower and years of abstaining from desiring human blood that keeps Edward from killing her in a full classroom.

That sex and food is separated, however, does not mean they don't share anything. In fact, both the sexual and the feeding have very much the same unfortunate outcome should they be allowed to operate freely. However, that doesn't mean that they are not separate things. Edward and Bella have to abstain from sexual intercourse, not because he is going to eat her if he can't control himself, but because he is going to crush her to pieces. That he wants her blood so much, however, might also end with her death, but that would be because of him biting her and sucking out all of her blood. One may actually assume that the sexual and the feeding, at least for Edward, might work as a dichotomy, because if he gives in to his desire to feed off of her, then he can never be with her again, because she is going to die. This, in turn, makes it clear that *Twilight* is not about how predatory males hunt for passive, inferior women for their sexual benefits. Although the theme is certainly touched upon at several occasions – with James at the end of *Twilight*, and when Bella was almost gang raped in Seattle – it does not lie at the heart of the story.

What does lie at the heart of the story is Edward's love for Bella, and it is this love that enables him to want to control himself. If he didn't love her, the chances are he would have killed her, but not because he wanted her sexually. Because he does want her sexually, he cannot eat her. The point here is that it's Edward's love that overshadows his desires. This is what makes the story so tantalising for many readers, and it is also completely within the

genre of the paranormal romance. Had Edward given into his desire to eat her, there would have been no more romance.

As already mentioned, Edward has been criticised for being controlling, creepy, abusive and even a stalker. “He sabotages her car, follows/watches her without her permission, and even marks her with his scent!” (Wilson 94). I don’t necessarily disagree with these assertions, but strongly agree with Jeremy Clyman who argues that the most defining trait of Edward Cullen is his ability to exert self-control, and that it is this self-control that is the reason for most of his controlling behaviour. “What some might label as quirky “vampire” behavior, or even hallmarks of a controlling or abusive relationship, I believe [are] a series of steps that reflect a sound strategy for carefully increasing self-control” (Clyman 140). If this is true, then it’s no longer as creepy that he watches her sleep, when the constant temptation “while monitoring thoughts, impulses, and feelings [...] is, [...] a form of [...] training” (Clyman 140). Edward is concerned that his self-control will slip, and he therefore creates very strict rules for himself that he then follows to make certain that Bella does not come to harm because of him. Edward’s strict sense of self-control, and the “training” he puts himself through, follows the basic rules for the romance genre. Because the greatest obstacle for the two of them is Edward’s “need” for her blood, he must take steps not to kill her, at the same time as he wants to be close to her, because he loves her. As mentioned before, because sexual desire and the desire to feed is not the same for the *Twilight* vampires, Edward has to combat the one desire to be able to give in to the other. ““I may not be a human, but I am a man,” [...]” (*Twilight* 311), is his answer when Bella asks him whether he wants her sexually. On this level, one may argue that the two desires are the same, but the result is that he has to control himself, or else. But that is only true when one forgets that it is love that makes him control himself at all, and go through all the pain, instead of simply giving in to his desires. Had the two been the same, he would have been just like Dracula and raped her, and this would not have been a romance.

Perhaps we may be able to condone Edward for some of his controlling actions. Although Wilson argues: “Problematically, the books do not encourage readers to condemn these abusive actions, but rather actively encourage viewing Edward as a perfect boyfriend” (94). There is a reason for that. When Edward does his best to not only protect Bella from others (the Wolves, Victoria, and general clumsiness) but also from him, we might understand that his behaviour is a little strict, and especially when it is him that is the greatest problem. It’s not that his actions aren’t a little over the top that Bella (and by extension the books) “do

not encourage readers to condemn [his] abusive actions” (same page), but because she understands his need to constrain himself. Again, I’m not in opposition to Wilson in that his actions are over the top, but it makes sense that the book does not condemn him for it. The books encourage the reader to see how hard Edward is trying, and from that angle he may be seen as the “perfect boyfriend”. The text does not go against patriarchal hierarchy, but it doesn’t support it either.

In the end, and also in line with the romance genre, is Edward’s ability to change. The obstacle to their “eternal love” is Edward, and when Edward feels more in control, and when Bella demands more freedom, Edward changes. By the end of the *Twilight Saga*, he is no longer the abusive, patronising, and controlling boyfriend he used to be, and one can blame the metamorphosis Bella goes through that makes her immortal, but the simple truth is also that he has changed his behaviour towards her.

1.5 Arguing Against Feminism

“Romance novels have rarely, if ever, been treated by scholars as *aesthetic* objects, but rather as fungible, even standardized products” (Selinger 313). Therefore, it is very easy to fall into the feminist reading of the romance because of its availability (especially on these particular books), without looking at the structure of the actual genre, which is what will be attempted here.

First of all, we will start by pointing out a fact that makes the strict feminist understanding of romance novels that this thesis outlines ambiguous at best. “And although romance novels have been harshly criticized by feminist scholars, there are many women who consider themselves feminists who also read or write these novels” (Lee 54). This is in line with my main argument in this first chapter, that there is a difference between a strict feminist reading and what the paranormal romance is actually about. Despite the many aspects of the story the feminists point out that one may agree with.

A part of the feminist (mis-)interpretation stems from the idea that the woman is left with very little, or no, choice as the story moves along. “With their prototypical marriage endings, criticisms are levied against both narrative forms for their failure to challenge the system of social relations and norms from which they arise” (Lee 52). This is not correct in this case.

First of all there was never any certainty connected with the marriage “ending” of this particular story. “[...], Bella not only questions whether marriage is right for her, but also questions the entire institution of marriage, insinuating that it doesn’t work for everyone, [...]” (Wilson 57). It is clear that Bella is not about to jump into anything, simply because Edward is asking. “I was a very different person from my mother. Someone thoughtful and cautious. The responsible one, the grown-up” (*Eclipse* 45). Bella is quite clear that *she* is more responsible than her mother, both was and is, and that she is very clear that she might be just about to jump into the same mistake her mother always hoped she would not jump into. For her, it is clear that it is enough that they love each other. Edward, however, is very much interested in tying the knot. Perhaps it is only because of his age that marriage is so important to him. Meaning that, when he was alive, marriage was what you went for when you loved somebody. The fact that they do get married might still be seen as patriarchal dominance, but

then it is curious that the story does not end with marriage. In any event it is quite obvious that Bella chooses marriage. In fact, it takes almost a whole book for her to accept his proposal, and only because he gives in to her requests as well. Of course, one may argue that the romance has only one possible outcome, which is marriage, but the story doesn't *end* with marriage. In *Breaking Dawn* the couple is married very early in, and the story continues, which means that although marriage might be seen as predestined because of the genre, I believe that how that marriage came around, and also that it is not the ending of the story, matter. I will take a look at how the marriage came around first, before I make a very short analysis of what happens after.

Bella demands three things in particular when it comes to marriage. One, she wants to be turned into a vampire. Second, she wants Edward to do it himself. Third, she wants to have sex with him while she is still human.

First, we will discuss the protagonist wish for sex. "Scholars have argued that in positioning woman as sexually active rather than passive, romance authors create a female *subject* of desire. This can destabilize the traditional gender variables" (Lee 45). However, in *Twilight*, is it Bella who shows the most sexual interest. When Edward first kisses Bella, her reaction is much more than expected: "Blood boiled under my skin, burned in my lips. [...] My fingers knotted in his hair, clutching him to me" (*Twilight* 282). Although it was Edward that took the first step: kissing her, it is Bella who takes the next step. Although Edward stops her, that is not because he has a particular interest at being the one who makes all of the first attempts at any level of physical interaction, but because of what is describe in the section above – he must have absolute control, or else he is going to kill her.

Also, when Bella takes that step towards a more intimate embrace, there can be found nothing in the story that condemns her actions, nothing that "destabilize[s] gender variables" (Lee 45); her reaction is seen as normal, and accepted. Edward simply can't act upon it. This scene is made much more "aggressive" in the film version where Bella pulls him towards her much more strongly, and Edward flings himself into the wall behind him to separate them. Even this scene can't be seen to challenge anything in particular. They desire each other, and that's that.

The second time Bella puts forth her desire for sex is in *Eclipse* when they discuss marriage. In the end it boils down to two things: Edward's desire for marriage is met with Bella's desire for sex, and they agree. There is nothing in the text here that can be seen as a patriarchal dominance. This is a decision where the two of them get what they want. All in all,

the *Twilight Saga* comes across as this paranormal romance story which is very modern in the sense that the woman is also powerful. This brings us into the second part of the discussion: Bella's demand that she is changed by Edward.

"Through Edward, Bella believes, she herself can become a hero" (Greenberg 210). This is very much in line with the "new woman" that has risen in literature, film and gaming industry. The third² great change that happened to the vampire stories was the introduction into the genre of the powerful female character, although this might be a trend starting already in the Victorian period England, where the "new woman" who wants to stand on her own two feet is starting to emerge. In literature this new woman can be exemplified with *Jane Eyre*, and *Wuthering Heights* from the Victorian period, but it was *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (film in 1992, and series from 1997 to 2003) who really introduced the action heroine. "The most striking new element in the Buffy story, however, was the transformation of the passive Gothick heroine assaulted by vampires into an indomitable female warrior who prevails by equal parts force of character and athletic prowess" (Nelson 129). After this, there came more of these heroines. "[...] were translated in turn into post-2000 blockbuster movies such as *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* (2001), *Resident Evil* (2002), [...] *Xena: Warrior Princess* (1995-2001), and the vampire-werewolf saga *Underworld* (2003) and its sequels, and many others" (same page).

Bella falls into this category at the end of the saga. Before that she is hardly Xena: Warrior Princess, but she is much more after her transformation. Before the change, although she is considered beautiful by males, she is a character that believes she is plain, and she is very modest. She is set up as a very ordinary girl. "This representation appeals to us, as we exist in a world where being ordinary is unacceptable, where instead, one is supposed to have a perfect face, perfect boobs, designer clothes, and an all-around "bootylicious" body" (Wilson 50). What Wilson means is that to have a character who seems to be none of the things we are "supposed" to be, make Bella very likeable to the reader, who will therefore find it easy to relate.

However, when Bella is changed she achieves all of this, and becomes powerful as well. On this note, one might push the idea that the book sets up Edward as the one who changes Bella as a sign of male control, and that Bella could only become powerful through a man. That does not however, take into account that it is Bella's *active* choice to be changed by Edward. This also falls into the genre of the romance. Bella's wish to be changed by

² The full reading of all of the changes described by Nelson may be found in chapter six, on the pages 117-147

Edward, and not by, say Alice, is because of Bella's wish to share this experience, and every experience, with him, and him alone, not because she wishes a strong, abusive and patronising man to do it.

Now, we have had a look at Bella's terms, and how they may be read, we remain with the marriage that Edward wants, and Bella accepts. Traditionally, marriage made the woman socially dead, as she from then on, had no rights to economy, property, or inheritance. However, the basis of the argument that the fairy tale, and by extension the paranormal romance, upholds the patriarchal structure is based in the misconception that the institution of marriage is a tool used by men to have their women under control. Perhaps one may argue that this is present in the *Twilight Saga*, but because Bella is able to marry on her own terms is equally important. Also, one must not forget that although the genre makes marriage predestined, that means that although Bella cannot "escape" it, neither can Edward.

2 Chapter 2

2.1 The Second Face of the Vampire

Vampires harbour the fear of their age. In this part of the thesis, we will on this basis examine what type of fear the *Twilight* vampires inspire in our day and age, and from that angle examine why Bella is so caught up in being changed into one. If the vampire is supposed to symbolise the fear of a society, why does she want to become one?

Firstly, I want to mention that the vampire as a figure covers almost two centuries. Augustus Darvell, the famous vampire was created by Lord Byron in 1819. This vampire offers something that is very much different from Dracula, and the *Twilight* vampires. "Darvell is a compelling contemporary and glamorous traveling companion, not—as Count Dracula will be to Jonathan Harker—a repulsive old man who terminates a lonely journey" (Auerbach 13). Darvell is sympathetic, kind and offers comradeship. His successor, Lord Ruthven, who was created from the basis of Darvell, by Byron's doctor, John William Polidori, follows this trend. "This vampire, like Darvell, offers companionship, but unlike Darvell who dies after their journey, Ruthven: [...], binds the young man [Aubrey, the main character] to his oath, kills the woman he loves, and marries his sister in order to glut his thirst with her on their wedding night" (Auerbach 16). This vampire, like Dracula, for instance, is lethal and dangerous, but his "dreadful power springs from his oath of friendship" (Auerbach 16). Aubrey is unable to do anything about all the dreadful things Lord Ruthven does because he is his friend. The argument is simple: in the case of the Byronic vampires, this fear has more to do with the transcending of class and intimacy between friends:

In societies where families are inescapable and marriage is enforced, friendship may be a more indelible taboo than incest. In a dreadful way, the Byronic vampire/friend fulfils the promise of Romanticism, offering a mutuality between subject and object so intense that it overwhelms conventional hierarchies and bonds (Auerbach 19).

The fear brought by Dracula is different. "His [Dracula's] empathy with "children of the night" rather than with humans released a dimension of fear: the fear, not of death and the

dead, but of being alive" (Auerbach 94). So there is a clear distinction between the fear the Byronic vampires inspired (friendship beyond class) and the fear Dracula inspired (the fear of living). In line with this, it is my argument that the *Twilight* vampires inspire something different than its predecessors.

[...], Cullen and his kin merely exemplify the essential nature of the vampire; it changes to fit the zeitgeist, and this is what it has always done. Our monsters are defined by our culture – show me what you fear and I will show you what you are, as it were – and if we wish to understand our world, the vampire is as good a place as any to start" (Scott 21).

But what fear might that be, and how does that affect Bella's decision? In the beginning of this thesis, we said that much of Edward's behaviour could be explained away as being ways to control his "needs" so that he doesn't kill Bella, and why much of the implications of his actions could be accepted without criticism because of the genre. There are, however, more aspects of Edward's character, and aspects of the other vampires' characters that we can have a look at. The fear the Cullen's bring with them, is not the fear of abusive relationships, but something else entirely. I will argue that the fear the vampires in *Twilight* bring with them, is the fear of never being good enough.

"[...] we exist in a world where being ordinary is unacceptable, where instead, one is supposed to have a perfect face, perfect boobs, designer clothes, and an all-around "bootylicious" body" (Wilson 50). In addition I might add: perfect career, perfect kids, expensive cars, being popular; have a perfect family to which you are a hundred percent devoted, and have a life free of pain, sorrow and death; to be perfectly safe.

The vampires in *Twilight* have all that. They are immensely strong and fast, and incredibly beautiful. "[...] all [were] devastatingly, inhumanly beautiful. They were faces you never expected to see except perhaps on the airbrushed pages of a fashion magazine" (*Twilight* 19). They are something quite different from Dracula. Dracula has the appearance of a man. Yes, he looks different, with his: statue appearance, coldness, peculiarly arched nostrils, cruelly fixed mouth, sharp white teeth, extremely pointed ears, and extraordinarily pallor (Stoker 15, 15, 16, 17, 17, 17, and 17, respectively). All of these features make his appearance different from most people, but he still looks like a man. The *Twilight* vampires look even more like humans than Dracula does, and do not share any of the peculiarities of their predecessor. Instead, they are often described as statues, when their beauty is not in focus. Especially Rosalie is talked about by critics as existing only to be beautiful in the saga,

and her story serves as a warning that beauty in a woman is desirable, although potentially catastrophic. However, it's not only Rosalie who is beautiful: "From the very first moment the Cullens are introduced to the reader, there is no equivocation as to just how perfect they are [...], impeccably dressed, driving brand new high-end cars, and maintaining a socially and intellectually privileged position in their high school" (Goebel 171). They have everything, and even how the others students talk about them indicates that they are different from the rest. Although this story is slightly different from the typical "popular boy meets unpopular girl" stories, there is a certain similarity between them, in that the Cullens are the most popular students at school, and therefore also elevated above the rest.

There are several ways the Cullens are in a favourable position compared to the rest of their society.

Firstly, as described above, they have a special position at school. They are cloaked in mystery, as none of the students really know anything about them. All the knowledge about them (relayed to us from Jessica in *Twilight* pages 20-22) boils down to them being foster children. Jasper and Rosalie are supposedly twins. Emmet and Rosalie are together, and Alice and Jasper are together. And they moved down from Alaska. That's all the students know about them, and the teachers can only add that they are brilliant students and contact information. By other means, no one knows anything about them. That sets a stage where they are incredibly mysterious and set outside of their supposed social peer group. That makes them extremely interesting.

Secondly, they have more material goods than anyone could ever have wished for. They are the embodiment of the American Dream. Because of Alice's little talent of seeing the future, they have made millions on the stock exchange, which makes them filthy rich. "Each time the reader/viewer enters the Cullens' home [...] or one of their many exotic cars, it bolsters the hierarchical divide Meyer creates and causes a desire to dissociate with the humans of the text and identify with the vampires" (Goebel 171). They are rich, they are elegant and educated; they are set up as having everything everyone would ever wish for. We want to be like them, and have it all. This paves the way for the reader being okay with Bella dying, and turning into a vampire. But more importantly, it makes the reader associate with the vampires and disassociate with the humans in the text, who are seen as mediocre, and therefore not worthy of our interest. In fact, apart from Bella and Jacob (who is not exactly ordinary), we hear so little about the human community that it might as well have not been included. The angle of the story makes us, not only focus on the vampires, but makes us want

to be like them, therefore one might say that they vampires' way of life is seen to be superior to our own and therefore desirable.

Thirdly, the Cullens are also seen to be better than the Quileute natives. The Cullens are actually integrated into society, whereas the natives live by themselves on the reservation, away from the white population in the area. They have their own schools, too, and we don't get to see any of them working, shopping, or even travelling in or through Forks, the exception being Charlie's native friends. Not only serves this as a means of saying "they're different", it also works to make the relationship between Bella and Jacob less probable, and perhaps also less desirable.

The perfect example of how the Cullens are seen as superior to the Quileute natives is how Jacob can be seen as being the complete opposite of Edward. Jacob is described as being much more animalistic than Edward. He's abnormally huge, and not just for his age. He has enormous muscles, is broad across the shoulders and, of course, his skin and hair colour is referred to a lot. In addition we have the mutual distrust between the vampires and the Wolves, and as we most often hear the vampire's side of things, the wolves are considered to be wild and uncontrollable – the perfect words to replace the term "savage". "The wolves' bodies run hot, and their physical anger cannot be contained" (Wilson 173). Although Wilson exaggerates a little, it is true that both Paul and Sam lost it due to the wolf genes. In addition, Jacob is a lot poorer than Edward, dresses differently, and hasn't had the chance to go to as many universities and repeat high school so many times. In fact, after his transformations started to occur, he doesn't really have many clothes on at all. "[...], Jacob seems to be all about practicality and function. After his transformation, he is usually depicted as topless, never wearing anything more than cut-off sweats and t-shirts" (Chau 184). This only works to accentuate the native inheritance represented by Jacob, which is seen as being inferior to the lifestyle of the vampires. In comparison, Edward wears fancy clothing every day.

In addition, one might add, is the dichotomy between mind and body, where according to Wilson, Jacob can be seen as the body and Edward the mind (173-176). The most notable difference between the two is that although the body of Edward is also a focus point, Jacob's body is not only more focused upon than Edward's is, but the language surrounding the descriptions is different. One cannot argue that Jacob's body is more impressive (especially in the film version), but none the less: "[...] Edward is beautiful and god-like, while Jacob is "hot" and muscular" (Wilson 175). Mind over matter is the key phrase here, which can be translated to Edward over Jacob.

Fourthly, the Cullens' way of life and interests are also more refined and sophisticated than the lifestyle and interests of others in Forks. Basically we have no idea what the Quileute natives do with their time. From what we hear from the rest of society, the Newtons own a store in town where Bella works a few hours along with Mike Newton. Apart from his dislike of action films and that he likes romantic comedies we learn very little of his interests. Jessica likes to shop, and the other friends we know even less about. All Bella's father do is work, eat at the diner, watch baseball, and fish. Compared to the Cullens, the rest of Forks represents low culture.

[...] the Cullens are presented as living the good life, and their activities and tastes are associated with high culture: they like classical music, appreciate art, value education, like to travel, and have sophisticated fashion and home décor know-how. Their home is depicted as opulent, decked-out in white and gold with an accompanying garage populated with luxury cars (Wilson 176).

Others in the series simply can't compete with how they live their lives in terms of wealth, for one, but also in terms "cultural worth" if one may.

Fifthly, the Cullens' way of family life, can be seen as one of the greatest factors of their desirability. "Although Edward and Bella are the center of the novel's narrative, the series is equally concerned with the contemporary American nuclear family [...]" (Silver 122). The nuclear family in America has been the sign of success for more than two centuries, and still is an ideal. The Cullens have it, and it works well for them. Carlisle is the only one who actually has a job. Although the Cullens don't depend on his income, he serves the function of the breadwinner of the family, especially because he is the only male character that works. He is also the oldest male in the family, and is seen as being the father of the family. There are two reasons for that: one he is the oldest vampire, and the oldest male vampire in that family, and it was he that "created" several of its members.

Esme is seen as the mother of the family, although she didn't actually birth anyone of them, or even help to create them, and she is mostly concerned with the house, and is actually never seen to leave the house in the entire *Saga* except to hunt, and when she and Carlisle goes to Europe in *Breaking Dawn*. She may therefore be seen as the traditional housewife in the nuclear family.

The "children" of the family: Emmet, Rosalie, Jasper, Alice and Edward are hardly children, but they play the part. They go to school, and we can understand from the strange picture with all the graduation caps that they have done this several times already. Despite the

fact that they don't exactly need to go to school at all or even let the world of Forks know they exist. From the point of view that none of them are actually children, one might think it's weird that they willingly participate in the charade at all. Why don't they have their own jobs? Why don't they do other things than repeating high-school over and over? Edward even says that Rosalie and Emmet have remarried at least once, just for show (Robert Pattinson. Film). Although one is able to write this off as a way to limit the story so that the focus is not taken away from the nucleus, which is the love between Edward and Bella, it also works to present the view that this is how a family is supposed to be like.

It is interesting to see (or hear) two aspects of Meyer's own words:

Almost everything that went into *Twilight* was unconscious [...] And then I kind of realised the Cullens are like my family and I'd never seen that and here you have this really big family with these great parents and all this love and yet at the same time they're very different people [...] (Meyer, Stephenie. "A Conversation with Stephenie Meyer").

One, Meyer simply wrote. The words flew out from her fingers (literally), and two, the Cullens are like her own family. Later we will use this to connect the Cullens with Mormonism, but right now we will simply use it to underline what I have already said: the Cullen family is seen as harbouring the best of family values, and therefore establishes an undead version of the American Dream. "Thus, though monster scholar David Skal claims the horror genre deals with the impossibility of the American Dream, *Twilight* does not acknowledge this impossibility. Instead, the saga presents us with the Cullen vampires, who embody undead versions of the dream" (Wilson 20). So far we have said that the vampires here have the American nuclear family that is seen to be the embodiment of the success of American society. What is there in the saga that says that this is something towards which we should want to aspire?

There are two other families in *Twilight* that we can have a look at to answer that question: Jacob's and Bella's. If we look at Jacob's family first we find that it's not exactly idyllic. For one, they are not rich. Their house is rather small. "[...], Jacob's house resembles a "tiny barn," and his garage consists of "a couple of preformed sheds that had been bolted together with their walls knocked out" (Wilson 177). Jacob's family is also not complete. His mother died when he was young, his father's in a wheelchair and his two sisters don't live at home and he very rarely sees them at all.

Bella's family life doesn't fare much better in comparison. Her parents are divorced, and she spent her childhood with her mother in Phoenix, only seeing her father two weeks every summer. The only reason Bella goes to live in Forks at all was so that Renee could follow her new husband around on his career. Renee is criticised for being a none-existent mother throughout the series: "[...] Renee, whose most notable feature in the saga is her absence" (Whitton 126), and was never much of a mother at the saga's initiation, so there is no strong family connection there to begin with.

Charlie is also criticised. Although he may be seen as a greater parental figure than Renée, Bella can go wherever she likes, almost whenever she likes. Only after Bella goes to Italy to save Edward does her father set some boundaries and grounds her for a while. Apart from that, he is almost always at work, and when he's not he's watching baseball or fishing. Neither can he be seen as having a better relationship with Bella than Renee does, albeit he is on the other side of the scale. According to Lisa M. Dinella and Gary Lewandowski, the family hierarchy this family has created has two completely different aspects of it. Bella and Renee are seen to have enmeshed boundaries, which mean that the relationship is characterised by over sharing, and guilt. "[...] Bella also feels responsible for Renee's happiness [...]" (Dinella and Lewandowski 182). Bella's relationship with Charlie is on the other end of the scale, and is called rigid. These relationships are "characterized by high degrees of disengagement, low levels of sharing, and a lack of intimacy" (Dinella and Lewandowski 183). The two of them talk very little and they both seem to prefer being alone. Of course, much of Bella's time at home is spent up in her room where she can be with Edward without her father's knowledge, whereas Charlie spends most of his time at work. That means that most of the time, they're not physically close enough to each other to have many conversations, and the situation is exacerbated when Bella refuses Charlie's attempts "to get closer to Bella's emotional core, [...] when he meets resistance, he nearly always backs down" (Dinella and Lewandowski 184). I have to admit, though, that after Renesmee is born and Charlie takes on the role of grandfather, I believe that this relationship gets better. Perhaps because Bella has moved out of the house and she is no longer Charlie's responsibility, or perhaps they now have a mutual desire to take care of Renesmee, when she's around his place. Either way, it's as if they're more of a family when Bella's no longer human, and lives away from him. Ironically, I might add, Bella still keeps a very big secret from him, but now he knows that she does, whereas before she was turned, he didn't know

Bella was keeping a secret from him. Perhaps this brought a new kind of relationship between them based on trust, despite the fact that Charlie never gets to know anything.

We now move on to describe the vampires' bodies. Rock solid and often compared to statues or gods – Edward is especially compared with Adonis –, this is something new for the vampire. "Where most of her predecessor-contemporaries made [...] typical late twentieth-century choices in constructing their evil vampire narratives, Meyer directly taps into the new Gothick sensibility of the twenty-first century that blends the monstrous with the divine" (Nelson 134). Meyer blurs the line between what is supposedly an evil creature and a creature that looks more like an angel. Despite the fact that the vampires are undead creatures, and lustful like we explored in the first face of the vampire in chapter one it is apparent that: "Meyer's 21st-century vampires, in particular, are more angelic than monstrous" (Wilson 16). The vampires, despite of their bloodlust, can be read as agents for good. Even when Edward tells Bella that he hunted humans for food for a while, this is presented in the most favourable of lights: "'[...] Because I knew the thoughts of my prey, I could pass over the innocent and pursue only the evil'" (*Twilight* 343). It's as if Edward cannot be at fault, and although he has killed people, even that is presented in such a way that we feel the victims deserve it, because they were "evil".

Another element that is new as of this vampire is the lack of fear for the sun. They avoid the sun, but that is because they have to keep their secret to the humans, and therefore they shy away, or covers up their bodies with clothing, like Alice does in the movies. "[...], in daylight they don't turn to dust; rather, they sparkle beautifully, [...]" (Nelson 139). Nelson compares this to the "Tibetan Buddhism", or "the Christian resurrection body, or the Gnostic "radiant" astral body, [which] promises immortality" (139). The vampires' bodies are here strongly linked to religion, a theme that I will bring up again in the third face of the vampire. It is important to notice that the religious theme is of a special kind: resurrection. "The fact that the vampire's diamond bodies are visible to the naked eye in daylight strongly suggests they belong to some category of the divine, not the demonic" (139). The new vampires are more like gods than humans; they carry with them a promise of resurrection, and their sparkling bodies are visible to the naked eye, for ordinary humans. I stress that this means that vampires, not only can be seen as being higher creatures than humans, but also that they promise a better, brighter and stronger future body for humans. It's as if they can be seen the embodiment of the Christian faith where the soul will return to their bodies. Vampires can be seen as humans who have ascended, rather than descended.

In addition to sparkling bodies, they have super powers. As already mentioned, they are super fast and super strong, but that isn't all – some have super powers too. Just to mention a few: Alice is clairvoyant, Edward reads minds, Jasper controls emotions, Jane makes people feel pain and Aro can read every thought you've ever had through touching you. There seems to be no end to what vampires can do and this accentuates my point above, that vampires are ascended humans. If the human was particularly sensitive, let's say towards people's feelings, and that human was turned into a vampire, he might have that sensitivity strengthened as well, and become like Jasper. However, there is no guarantee that you'll get super powers. Esme's strongest trait is mothering, and what she does most of the time is being a housewife, and being the mother of the family. Rosalie's strongest trait is beauty, while Emmet's is his strength. Although super powers aren't guaranteed, the idea that your strongest traits are rendered even stronger when you ascend is the same, which means that super power or not, you are more yourself when you have been resurrected into this sparkly being.

As for Edward: he loves Bella. There is no question about it. He is the most attentive, smartest, most caring and devoted boyfriend imaginable. He goes to extremes to keep her safe, and to keep himself in control. He even abandons her for the sake of her safety. He stays by her side, never leaves, watches her when she sleeps, listens to her every word (and would have listened to her every thought if he could); has multiple thoughts at the same time, and throws out every interest that is not connected to her when they come together. He is the embodiment of the perfect boyfriend who is always by your side, loving you. No human can be that attentive for so long; it's physically impossible, which means that no human boyfriend can ever compete with that level of devotion.

"And so Twilight taps into our desires for transcendence, though transcendence of a particular kind. Bella longs to feel powerful in her own body and freed from the limitations that being a human entails. She idealizes and admires vampires for their strength and beauty and the idea that they have no limitations" (Greenberg 210). Perhaps this feeling makes us want for a boy-/girlfriend like Edward, but it may also make us feel that we want to be that kind of boy-/girlfriend, who is always attentive, always interested, and is super smart, strong and can protect him/her from everyone and everything. I believe that this relationship touches a chord within us, and in that we can understand Bella's desire well. There are so many uncertainties in this world, and if we could be more than we are, we would be safe too. Bella has that opportunity. The implication this is something that will be taken up later, but Bella

actually succeeds in becoming a vampire, and therefore becomes “perfect”, which might sound like a good thing.

"The new "bright" Gothick in its many forms makes the radical suggestion that if we want to get to heaven, monsters and demigoddesses can help show us it is right here on earth" (Nelson 19). I'm actually not sure whether I understand Nelson correctly here. If she by this quote means that heaven is right where we are, as we are, and that the monsters are here to show us that we are perfect as we are, then I disagree. If she means the opposite, that monsters can show us how we should be, or how we desire to be, and that we might become just that because heaven “is right here on earth” then I agree. Either way, it is evident that Bella feels that she has to change, to ascend, if she should ever be equal to Edward and his family, and through her, so does the reader. It is therefore my argument, that the vampires in the *Twilight Saga* makes humans feel inadequate, small, weak and imperfect, and therefore taps into our collective fear that we can never be good enough, and therefore, through the *Twilight Saga*, and through Bella, we wish to be vampires ourselves, and be perfect.

2.2 *Twilight* and the Woman

In the previous section, we said that through Bella and by other means, we are made to see that the vampires are perfect, and also how we are made to desire to be like them. In this section, we will discuss how the *Twilight Saga* attempts to target women in particular. The implication of that is also something that will be taken up at the end of this passage.

Wilson characterises Bella as “[...] a clumsy, low-self-esteem teenager living on the Olympic Peninsula [...]” (18), and she’s right. Bella is a klutz, has very low self-esteem, and is very none-descript. Somehow that makes many feel like they are in Bella’s shoes. Of course, not everyone feel like that, but many do. Especially the fact that she is very none-described makes it easier to place oneself in her shoes as well, but that does not necessarily mean that her character targets women.

Because the paranormal romance has a foundation in the fairy tale I argued in chapter one that Bella bears the resemblance of Snow White, with her pale face and black hair, and plays the role of Little Red Riding Hood. This follows one of the founding principles of the fairy tale. If we take Cinderella as an example, she is a lowly maid, with ashes in her face and is dressed in rags, or servant’s clothing. The very principle of those clothes and description is to have women from the same background identify with her. Women who are poor, and dirty, and have few hopes in the world resemble Cinderella, and will recognise her situation as their own. Those are the people this fairy tale is meant for. To be more precise, those are the *women* this fairy tale is meant for.

Little Red Riding Hood is no different. Especially if one takes one of the Grimm versions of Little Red Cap into account. In this version, Little Red Cap is “Too immature to cope with a male, [...] [and] [...] is devoured by the ultimate sensual pleasure, a sexually mature male” (Kramar 23). The male here is the wolf, and the story might be read as a story where a young woman is either raped or seduced by an older and more experienced man. In that sense the fairy tale is a warning to young women about venturing out into the dark world alone. The warning is meant for any woman who might hear it.

Bella is similarly portrayed. She has very few characteristics and has been given a shallow physical description. Because of this, it is easy to believe that she is like the reader. Her background is also very modern, in a sense. Her parents are divorced and she finds

herself in a situation where she moved from her mother to her dad. About fifty percent of all marriages end in divorce these days, which means that her situation is not unique. Of course, if things were black and white, that would mean that the other fifty percent would not feel connected to her, but that's a little besides the point. The point is that her family is rooted in a very modern phenomenon, which means that everything is not perfect right from the start. This does not necessarily mean that the *Twilight Saga* targets women in particular, but it does mean she is easier to relate to.

The *Twilight Saga* plays on the idea that Bella can choose between guys. Throughout the entire second novel, and most of the third, Bella is seen to struggle as to whom she should be with (this has been downplayed in the film adaptation). Both guys offer her different things, and Bella is very much aware of what they have to offer. In *New Moon* when Edward goes away, Bella finds she is spending more and more time with Jacob, and forms some sort of relationship with him. As a story on its own, it would have made sense for her to end up with Jacob, and learnt to love him. However, that doesn't happen. In *Eclipse* she finally agrees to marry Edward. One way of looking at the outcome is to say that Bella chose Edward because she felt he had the more to offer. It seems that Bella made a decision through deliberation. The point here is that it's easy to place oneself in her shoes, because of this choice she has to make. Both guys have something to offer her, and she has to choose what she feels is best for her. Not many experience that "love at first sight" and that "love conquers all" and that is why this illusion is successful, because more readers can identify with having choices than being instantly and irrevocably drawn to one special person no matter what.

In terms of much of the feminist criticism levied at Bella, she fulfils the age old "female" portrayal of the subservient, modest and beautiful girl. Also in terms of the rules of the romance, Bella is intelligent, and modest about it: "[...], her extraordinary intelligence manifests as participation in an advanced academic placement program in Phoenix and a school essay about whether "Shakespeare's treatment of the female character is misogynistic"" (Kramar 23). One has to look very carefully to see these signs in the text. Very little of what Bella gives us of information has to do with homework, except that she does them, school, classes, or the writing of texts, making presentations, or any of the normal school activities. When we do find some of these signs, we find that she is smart. This serves as a further example of how the saga can be seen as targeting women, because of the age old connotations between being modest and smart, and being female, and a female character in a romance.

Wilson writes (41-42) that when she went to Forks on one occasion, she found numerous people walking around in team Jacob and team Edward t-shirts, but there were no team Bella t-shirts to be found anywhere, except for a couple of cuties for kids, and that when she asked the reply she got was that “There is NO team Bella!” (41). Does that mean that no one is rooting for Bella? No, the explanation is rooted in the reader’s belief that she is Bella. There is no team Bella, because we’re all “Bella”, so to speak. “They thus do not root for Bella, but *become* Bella” (Wilson 41). Bella is a character who is very easy to identify with.

That the reader should identify with Bella is what the feminists fear. Especially because of the role Bella plays as the “good girl”. Without question, Bella does perform this role. She always does her homework, and she cooks for Charlie and does the laundry. The feminists fear that this portrayal of Bella as the caretaker of the house eases the way for young women into domesticity, and strengthens the social rules where it is the woman who takes care of the house. They might be right in that claim, as a lot of girls identify with Bella. However, the effect of Bella performing this role is also to make her more identifiable to older women. A lot of the fans are themselves mothers and wives, and it is natural (especially if the feminists are right that many women are “domesticated”) that they identify with Bella when they share the same work. Even for the women who aren’t housewives, or feel domesticated, the washing and cleaning is something they can identify with, because it’s a workload everyone must do.

I agree with Greenberg, in that Bella’s wish to feel “powerful in her own body” and to be “freed from the limitations [of] being human [...]” (210) is what drives her to become a vampire. That she can also spend eternity with Edward only makes the leap so much easier. “Through Edward, Bella believes, she herself can become a hero” (Greenberg 210). I don’t think Bella’s desire for being a hero is a very powerful motivation, but being able, beautiful, safe, and not to need to fear the inevitable end we all share, is. Perhaps it’s our own belief in human fallibility that makes this story so potent. Bella journeys towards becoming something more than what she is – we follow her every step, and the reader shares her desire to be more and be safe.

Bella’s life is hardly normal, and hardly safe. Throughout the saga she is almost killed by vampires several times by chance and in *Eclipse* an entire army is created just so that Victoria can get rid of the Cullens that protect her. Although the reader can hardly identify with these situations, he/she can identify with how Bella handles it. “[...], Stephenie Meyer has given us a female protagonist and one that is arguably bright, brave, adventurous, and

noble” (Wilson 62). Bella handles the situations she ends up in pretty well. I’d say better than most people would have done, but not better than most people imagine they would have handled it. How Bella handles her problems taps into the readers’ desire to be brave and noble themselves.

That Bella can be read as being “any” woman is important. Under the previous headline, the argument was that the vampires represent the fear of never being good enough, and that the story is created so that we as readers should desire to become like them. That Bella can be read as “any woman” is therefore to say that especially women should, or do, wish to aspire to be more. Perhaps we can even say that the story stresses that it’s women who needs to be more.

In this part of chapter two, we have seen how Bella can be read as being “any” woman because of how easy she is to identify with. By itself that does not criticise contemporary patriarchal society. However over the next two stages of chapter two, we are going to look at the vampires again from a different angle, and finally discuss one of Bella’s traits see what actually happens to Bella when she is turned into a vampire.

2.3 The Third Face of the Vampire

“Indeed, the “vegetarian” Cullens could be a Mormon family living in Provo, Utah” (127), Silver writes. I’m going to take a step further and say that the vampires in *Twilight* are representations of Mormonism, and therefore strengthen the idea that the *Twilight Saga* has an aspect of patriarchy that cannot be overlooked. Because of my strong argumentation against a feminist reading of this saga, it might sound odd that I’m now agreeing with it. That is not so. In chapter one, in particular, I took a step away from feminism because it had focus on the wrong thing. It overlooked the textual rules laid down by the genre. However, in this section we the feminist reading has got it right. There is absolutely an aspect of a patriarchal dominance in *Twilight*, and that is, again, the vampire. However, it is never my argument that the *Twilight Saga* sets up patriarchy as right, or natural. The focus of this part of the chapter is both the patriarchal dominance of the vampires, but also how they can be viewed as Mormons.

Family is a theme we have discussed several times already, but from different points of view. From this angle we will look at the Cullen family and how it’s different from other families in the saga, but also how it may be seen as a better, and safer family, especially for women. First we will look at the family structure compared with other families in the saga. Secondly we will look at the family in relation with the rest of the society they exist in. Thirdly we will look at how the story works to underline the strength of the Cullen family from the point of view of the women in the family. These things we look at to see how the patriarchy is structured.

“In the *Twilight* saga, Meyer manipulates elements of the vampire myth in order to further her representation of the Cullens as the father-focused Mormon ideal of the “eternal family”” (Whitton 130). Carlisle is the head of this family: the patriarch. His story is one of legendary proportions where he started out as a vampire hunter and ended up as a vampire, and how he managed through sheer strength of will, and religious faith to become a vampire who abstains from human blood and can commit all of his life to save human lives.

From when we first learn of the Cullens, we learn that the “kids” are Mr. and Mrs. Cullen’s foster children. Already from step one are Carlisle and Esme situated on top of the hierarchy. From learning Carlisle’s story, we have to be impressed with his strength of will,

and one cannot overlook that it is Carlisle's voice that is the most sought after. "The patriarch ultimately makes all decisions unilaterally, and the rest of the family adheres to his decisions. It is significant that when, in *New Moon*, Bella canvasses the Cullens on the issue of her becoming a vampire, Carlisle's is "the vote that mattered most, the vote that counted more than any majority"" (Whitton 129). It's Carlisle's acceptance more than anyone's that means the most to Bella, but also in this family. Much of Carlisle's "power" in the family stems from the fact that Carlisle was the first vampire in that family, and when Bella seeks to join his family, his opinion is the most valuable. That makes complete sense. It also strengthens the idea that this family has one patriarch who has all the power, even though the rest of the family also cast their vote.

Bella's story implies that a woman outside of this family lives a very dangerous life. The story of all the women in the Cullen family mirrors Bella's story in that it was only after their inclusion into the Cullen family they became safe.

Without recounting too much of Bella's story, we may repeat the headlights. In *Twilight*, Bella is attacked by men twice. The first time was an almost gang rape, and she was saved by Edward. The second attack was done by James, and again she was saved by Edward. In *New Moon* she was almost killed by Laurent, this time saved by the Wolves. In *Eclipse*, Victoria raises an army and Bella is saved by the Cullen family, Edward, and the Wolves. Finally, in *Breaking Dawn*, Bella is in trouble again, but this time she is a vampire herself, and is instrumental to the survival of the Cullens, and the Wolves. To summarise: only when Bella is a part of the Cullens is she not in need of a rescue. This is a resounding demonstration that being with the Cullens is the safe place to be. Here you are protected; here you are strong. Before, and outside of this family, you are weak, alone and unprotected.

Esme's story is very much similar. Although we don't really hear much of it, what we do hear is not exactly flattering. Esme lost her son and jumped off a cliff to commit suicide. Carlisle just happened to come by and saved her by turning her. The weird part is how simple that story is. There is no courting afterwards, for example. Carlisle and Esme are just together from then on. Carlisle made himself a woman. The only equivalent that comes to mind is an old cartoon drawing of a caveman hitting a woman over the head with his club and then drags her back into his cave by the hair. After this, Esme seems to be just fine. Of course, the *Twilight Saga* does happen decades after Esme tried to commit suicide, so the only trait that is left is the mothering and how she takes care of the house. The point is that once Esme's with

Carlisle, everything seems to be alright and they have that “happily ever after” story in the safety of the Cullen family.

Rosalie’s story is very much the same although the angle is different. She had the perfect life, and was betrothed to the most eligible bachelor there was in her society. Then she was gang raped by her betrothal and his friends and left for dead. Carlisle happens to come by and saves her. After her transformation, she takes revenge on the men that raped her, and returned to Carlisle and the family where no men could touch her ever again. She’s safe with the Cullens.

Alice’s story is also similar. She was in an institution until she was changed by a vampire before James could get to her. In there, she had been locked up as insane in the 1920’s. Only men worked at asylums back then, and it was a male vampire that had held her captive. Once out, she found the Cullens. Although different from the other women’s, Alice’s story accentuate the idea that this is the place to be. The Cullen family is the best, the strongest and the safest.

All of these examples prove that for women in particular, the Cullen’s is the place to be, if you are to be safe. It accentuates the idea that the outside world is dangerous, and it’s the realm of dangerous men. Inside the family is where you are safe.

The mother figure in *Twilight* is a very delineated and diminished figure. Renee is non-existent most of the time, and viewed as incapable when she is talked about. Esme only tends to the home. Jacob’s mother is dead. Males can be seen as being better at taking care of the children than the women, and the vampiric “father” more than the human men. “The most explicit example of this transfer of parental authority from the inadequate figure of the mother to the more capable male is when Edward’s’ dying human mother, Elizabeth, literally hands over her son to the superior custody of Carlisle” (Whitton 129). Of course, Elizabeth died shortly after of the same illness that Edward was dying from. But if the point of motherhood is to take care of their children and tend to them while they are sick and make sure they get better, she had no way of doing that. Carlisle could, and did, and continued to look after him.

Charlie also takes over the nurturing of the child when Bella moved to Forks, and he does act as a parent a few times, and is trying to look after his daughter, in his own way. Most of the time, however, as already mentioned earlier, he is working, fishing or watching baseball, and has little time for Bella. Edward can be seen as a “better” father for Bella sometimes, as he is being criticised for acting the part. “Edward’s status as a vampire can be read as encapsulating the male privileges that patriarchal society affords – he is the one, [...],

who has all the power. His word is law; hers only requests” (Wilson 75). *Twilight* is full of examples where Edward sets the boundaries Bella has to follow. Sexual abstinence is one of them, where he clearly says that: ““I don’t think that ... that ... would be possible for us”” (*Twilight* 310). Now, of course, we have the problem that Edward can crush Bella to death by mistake to contend with, but there is so much rhetoric that speaks in the direction that agrees with Wilson’s statement that it cannot be overlooked as mere human/vampire dichotomy.

One such example is the first night Bella invites Edward to stay the night and he said: ““Bring on the shackles – I’m your prisoner.” But his long hands formed manacles around *my* wrists as he spoke” (*Twilight* 302). It would be more “appropriate” should he use Bella’s hands to place shackles around his wrists, but instead he makes shackles on her, symbolising that it is he that is in control, and that what he says can be thought of as ironic.

Another example is one where Edward clearly received the role of being the elder and stronger: “Then he leaned forward and reached out with his long arms to pick me up, gripping the tops of my arms like I was a toddler. He sat me down on the bed beside him” (*Twilight* 297). Here, Bella is viewed as a child being picked up by the much stronger parent.

A final example of how Edward sets boundaries for what Bella can or cannot do is a scene we have already witnessed. In *Eclipse*, Bella goes to see Jacob without Edward’s consent. Here, we can get a good example of how Edward thinks he is justified in setting the rules and how Bella can be viewed as a stubborn child defying parental authority.

After Bella’s visit to Jacob without Edward’s consent, they have an argument, where they both express their feelings (*Eclipse* 140-144), and it seems that Bella’s argument is winning through, but a couple of days later, she finds that Edward has bought off his sister to “hold her hostage” every time he is away so that she can’t go to Jacob. Edward believes he is justified in his actions because of the lack of self-control the Wolves have previously shown, and he is actually supported by his sister, Alice, when Bella says: “Alice, don’t you think this is just a little bit controlling? Just a tiny bit psychotic, maybe?” Alice simply replies: “Not really.” [...]. “You don’t seem to grasp how dangerous a young werewolf can be. Especially when I can’t see them [...]”” (*Eclipse* 146). Edward’s restrictive behaviour is actually supported by his family, which may be seen as confirmation that Edward can do what he pleases because his decisions are the safest and therefore the most adult, whereas Bella’s wishes are seen as risky and therefore immature.

To give a further example of how women in *Twilight* are diminished, Wilson argues that the vampires in *Twilight* not only replace the parents in general, but also the mothers

specifically (95-100). “[...], Edward quite literally replaces Bella’s mother, Renee – he is the one who rocks and cradles her, the one who saves her from beasties, the one who soothes her fears and nourishes her [...].” (Wilson 98). Edward is this super parent who takes care of Bella in every way possible. The vampire is the superior caregiver.

Up until this point we have seen how the vampires in *Twilight* are as a family better than all other families in this world. We have also seen how they can be considered better parents and caregivers. We’re now moving on to see how the men in this society can be seen as better than the women of this family, although it has already been touched upon, when earlier I said that Carlisle is the superior patriarch of his family. However, first we will look at what connects the Cullens to Mormonism, and from that angle see how the men are seen as better than the women of the family.

To see what connects the Cullens to Mormonism, it is first important to place the Cullens in a spiritual context. We can do this quite easily by referring to one of the traits that is completely new to these vampires. They sparkle. “Meyer’s 21st-century vampires, in particular, are more angelic than monstrous” (Wilson 16). This is because of their sparkling skin. “[...], in daylight they don’t turn to dust; rather, they sparkle beautifully, [...].” (Nelson 139). These creatures are actually dead, in the sense that their bodies doesn’t actually need anything to exist, they just drink blood to stay strong. This sparkly being is very close to what one might think angels look like in Christianity. I think that Wilson’s words above are more in reference to their actions than their appearance, but their appearance are in absolute accordance with their actions. Instead of being these monstrous beings hunting for human lifeblood, they have devoted themselves to our protection (especially Carlisle), or otherwise to coexist with us without harming us. This places the Cullens in a firmly religious context. It doesn’t necessarily make them Mormon, but they are chained to religion.

It is very interesting to look at a certain passage in *Twilight* and *New Moon* that deals with the vampires’ souls. This definitely puts the Cullens in a Christian orientation. Edward takes the question of the soul really seriously, whereas Bella doesn’t truly believe in it. In her conversation with Carlisle in *New Moon* (36-37), we find that Bella doesn’t even really believe in religion: “Religion was the last thing I expected, all things considered. My own life was fairly devoid of belief.” (36), but Edward does: “Edward’s with me up to a point. God and heaven exist... and so does hell. But he doesn’t believe there is an afterlife for our kind.” [...]. “You see, he thinks we’ve lost our souls.”” (37). It’s a lot easier for Bella to let go of being human, if she doesn’t have a religious background. When the vampire is not adamantly

attached to evil, hell and the devil, and more about being immortal, shiny beings, why should she fear becoming one, especially when that means an eternity with her love?

Edward strongly believes that he has lost his soul, a belief that seems to be shared by a lot of other vampires. Bella, however, thinks otherwise. I think that the story takes upon it a very secular interest in religion, in that it's up to Bella (and through her, the reader) to think what (s)he feels is most appropriate, but there is no doubt as to Edwards feelings on the subject. He abandons Bella for the sake of her soul, because he cares about her so much, that he chooses to live away from her. What's interesting is that the story gives no answer. If Meyer had made it apparent that Bella is a soulless monster after the transformation, then the story itself would have had a very different reading. If Meyer had somehow given proof that she has a soul even after the change that too would have changed the story. I feel that Meyer takes a step away from religion in this book, in that it offers to the reader the chance to decide for him-/her. If one could have easily read into the series that the vampires have no souls, then one could not have denied that *Twilight* is actually criticising Mormonism. Had it been the other way around, and we had received some confirmation that the vampires have a soul, it would have been clear that Mormonism is an ideal. However, with the text that we do have, and no answer, it leaves it ambiguous, to an extent. Bella thinks they have a soul. The ironic part is that Edward is a firm believer that they don't. It's ironic because one of the leading members of this family, critics and I strongly believe can be read as Mormon, believes that the members of said family don't have souls. This will be brought up again in the conclusion. Right now, it's enough that the fact that this discussion takes place at all certainly roots this family into Christianity.

A theme that has been discussed already is the family's exceeding wealth. "As the Mormon Church is exceedingly wealthy, with current assets of, at a low estimate, \$30 billion, and as the church itself is not critical of wealth but rather actively works to amass it, it is not surprising that the wealth is held up as virtuous and good in [...] *Twilight* [...]" (Wilson 176). The vampires almost flaunt their wealth, and although Bella is resistant to it in the beginning, she eventually gives in, and accepts being dressed up by Alice in fancy designer clothes, and drive really expensive cars that haven't even come out on the market yet. Numerous critics argue that *Twilight* upholds capitalism and a consumer society by placing the reader in Bella's shoes, much as I have done, and through that make the enormous wealth of the Cullens desirable because of the way they are viewed, and made to be liked. Here, we merely point

out that this view on capitalism and wealth is connected to Mormonism, and is therefore yet another sign that the Cullens are Mormons.

Another of the firmly rooted themes of this family is the nuclear family, as already taken up. This is also an important part of Mormonism. “[...], *Twilight* [...] suggests that married monogamy creates a stable society while at the same time bolstering readers’ worth by feeding longstanding belief such as “true love conquers all.”” (Wilson 18). What she means is that the saga plays on the idea that “true love conquers all” to make people idealise married monogamy. Although I think Wilson is too strict here, I do believe as she does that both marriage and monogamy are portrayed as ideal. There are three reasons for that.

One: there are no other solutions present, or even discussed in the saga. Either you’re with Edward, or with Jacob, for example. Doing both is unthinkable. Going off on your own and leave their bickering behind is also equally unthinkable.

Two: that Bella agrees to marry is a strong indication that two people that love each other should marry. It is also what feminist critics love to point at, that makes women subordinate to men. I don’t say I agree, but I do agree with part of their argument that Bella “gives in” to Edward’s wishes. However, I think it’s more important that Edward can be seen as Mormon and through that it makes the marriage even more important. Especially in terms of what people who love each other usually do together.

Three: there is no sex before marriage in this novel. Bella clearly wants it. Edward confesses he wants it too, but it is Edward who declines until they’re married. No sex before marriage is a very typical Mormon doctrine, which means that Mormonism is easy to read in here as well. If we place Jacob, who cannot be read as a Mormon, in Edward’s shoes, I don’t think he would have refused.

From sexuality to equality, we will now look at the equality of the vampires in the Cullen family. Dietz claims: “*Twilight* does not just reflect Mormonism, *Twilight* positively glows [...] with Mormonism’s least appealing aspect: the subtle but powerful message its worshippers receive that men are superior and women are subordinate” (Dietz 100). If her words are true, then it must mean that the female characters of the family are not as powerful, or important as the male.

We have already talked about Carlisle, and we will treat him last. To shorten this down, we will have a look at the Cullens in general rather than go into a deep analysis of each character.

The obvious place to start is with Bella and Edward, however, because this is where Dietz' claims face the most opposition. As we have already discussed before, Edward is beyond Bella in every way for most of the saga, but at the end, one can argue she shines more than he does. She is physically stronger because of the human blood that remains in her body for a couple of months, and she is in complete control most of the time. Only once did she nearly kill a human, and she even beat Emmet arm wrestling. Her new ability to shield others was also instrumental to save the Cullens and friends against the Volturi, whereas Edward's role is very limited. At least in Bella's case, one may argue that she has found full equality with her man through joining the family.

Rosalie is mostly just vain in the saga, and Esme is unimportant as far as the actual storyline goes. She makes no real contributions at all throughout. Alice is the female before Bella turns vampire, which is the most glorified, but even she is not even close to the positive light surrounding Edward and Carlisle. If we choose to include vampires like Jane and Victoria into this, then the male/female binary is even less flattering for the women, but to do so would confuse a very clear line between the Cullens and the rest of the vampire "community".

In comparison to the female characters, Emmet is a very strong vampire, and is therefore seen as very useful, whereas Jasper is able to control emotions and is also a war veteran from countless vampiric battles. His ability to fight came in handy when Victoria sent an army against them. These two men are not more important than their spouses, although they are an important part of the family. To sum it up, although Esme in particular is an unimportant character, the women seem to be held in a favourable light in comparison with their male counterparts in the Cullen family. So why then is Dietz so certain in her claim. First of all, she did not only refer to the Cullens, but to the entirety of the *Twilight Saga*, in that light, one has to accept her words, because of what we have already talked about: how fathers replace mothers in the families in *Twilight*, and the lack of motherly care through women. However equal the men and women seem to be in the Cullen family, it is still my argument that it's the Cullens that represent Mormonism in *Twilight*. If, Mormonism carry with a message that men are superior, where then do we find it, if the relations between men and women are close to equal? Carlisle is our answer to that.

The act of making vampires can be done by anyone.

"In the texts, the bite as a transformational process is treated like a religious ceremony, where the participants understand the outcome and significance, but only certain

vampires understand how the process really works. In this regard, Carlisle takes on a pseudochastened, priest-like role, having performed this rite many times” (Goebel 173).

Carlisle is the person who is seen as more capable to perform this than the other vampires in his family. In fact, it is Carlisle who has created most of the family. Of course, Alice and Jasper chose to come to them, and Bella was created by Edward, but the rest of the family (Edward, Rosalie, Esme and Emmet) were all created by Carlisle.

As well as further emphasising the already explored topic of how men replace women as mothers in the saga, this also underlines the idea that men are superior to women in the saga, and that the men can be seen as gods. There is only one woman in *Twilight* who creates new vampires like Carlisle does, and that is Victoria. Carlisle created his vampires out of compassion, Victoria out of hate. They seem to be opposites of each other, and may share resemblance to the dichotomy of God and the Devil. Where Carlisle is seen as loving and caring, and creating, Victoria is hateful, vindictive and raging. This only further the reading that the Cullens are Mormons and that God is on their side, because Carlisle is a god-like father who watches over his creations.

In the light that this family is *the* place to be, one can say that not everything is great, and that to become a vampire comes at a price in pain. But as Goebel argues: “Even the pain involved in this transformation is downplayed by Meyer’s overly positive portrayal of the resulting vampiric life, with only Rosalie ever really lamenting the fact that she was “turned”” (173). They all feel they live a happy, sparkling life. They’re rich; they’re at the top of a society they’re not really a part of. They are beyond the rest of Forks, and they are absolutely Mormons.

2.4 Bella, the anti-hero

As already explored in this thesis, under the headline the Second Face of the Vampire, the vampires can be read as representing the fear in us that we may never be good enough. Bella wishes for complete equality with Edward. She knows that only when she too is made immortal, will they not only live forever, but she will no longer be the weak point of the party. She will be just as strong and fast, and smart as he is. This is all true and well, but first, she actually has to die. Despite the fact that there are people and forces in *Twilight* that wants Bella dead, it is my argument in this part of the thesis, that Bella is the only true and consistent anti-hero in the *Twilight Saga*. We will also take a look at what Bella has to sacrifice in order to become a vampire.

In *Twilight*, the story is about the love of Bella and Edward. It's about how they fall in love and some of the problems a human-vampire relationship may face, like intimacy issues, tackling Edward's murderous thirst, and the more normal inexperience of youth. Then, suddenly James appears, out of nowhere and he wants Bella. If it's just because of Edward's protectiveness that sets him off, or if it's that he also finds Bella irresistible, or that once a vampire has set themselves on a target he can't let go, we don't really know, but the point is that it's completely random that he's there. One can wonder why he was included at all. Perhaps only to make a typical end to the story where there is a rise in the suspense before the ending. James makes very little sense as an antagonist, and he doesn't return to be a part of the other books either.

In *New Moon* and *Eclipse*, we have Victoria. She's James' former mate, and has sworn herself to avenge his death. Edward was the one who killed him, and therefore her score to settle is with him. The problem for Bella is that Victoria wants her revenge on Edward to be Bella's death. Victoria is the strongest contender for being the antagonist of the saga. There are, however, two problems. Firstly, Victoria is a part of only three out of four books, and not even in the one that concludes the saga, and secondly, she's not really interested in Bella at all. She's interested in revenge on Edward, and Bella only happens to be the means to exact said revenge.

In *New Moon* and *Breaking Dawn*, we have the Volturi. They are without doubt the most powerful enemy in the saga. However, the Volturi aren't interested in Bella. Yes, in *New*

Moon they want Bella dead because she knows their secret, but that's only as a precaution, nothing more. In *Breaking Dawn*, they want Alice, not Bella. All of the struggles Bella is a part of, are related to Edward, or the Cullens – Bella only happens to be part of it.

One should also point out that the story from the point where Bella and Edward are married, is no longer about Bella, especially not after the honeymoon is cut short by her sudden and unexpected pregnancy. From the point of her pregnancy and until Renesmee is born, the story is told through Jacob's eyes, and therefore the story, as seen through his eyes, has little focus on Bella's inner thoughts. The reader is not allowed to see her except through Jacob. From that angle we might better see and understand what Edward and Bella both goes through – as it is becoming clearer and clearer that the baby will kill Bella –, but, we are also distanced from Bella in that this becomes a family problem. The whole family is torn between those who want Bella to have an abortion, and those who wish that Bella carries out the pregnancy. Although the decision is Bella's, in the end, it is clear that it's not only her problem, or even hers and Edward's, but the entire family's problem.

Especially after Renesmee has been born, and one of their Denali cousins, Irena, tells on them to the Volturi, the story is only about the Cullen family that has to cope with this enormous challenge. The Volturi, as we get to know, and have already explained, isn't interested in Bella, but the acquiring of Alice, and the destruction of the remaining Cullen clan. This means that the Volturi are not really the antagonists.

That the Cullens, and especially Edward, are considered the good guys, and are trying to protect Bella, is not to say that the Cullens are not a threat to Bella's life. Edward, who is the most constant threat to her safety, wants Bella alive: "'I keep waiting for it to happen.' [...] 'I know at some point, something I tell you or something you see is going to be too much. And then you'll run away from me, screaming as you go.' [...] 'I won't stop you. I want this to happen, because I want you to be safe [...]' (Twilight 339). He knows that his world, and himself, poses a serious danger for Bella, and he wants her to leave, but at the same time, he wants her to make that decision for herself. Edward doesn't want her to lose her pulse.

Bella, on the other hand, consistently wants to be changed into a vampire and become Edward's equal. She weighs the pros and cons and decides that she wants to be with him more than anything in the world, no matter the costs. The only way to do that is to die and be resurrected as a vampire.

That Bella is so keen on dying implements the idea that to become a vampire, and therefore to become a Mormon, is literally to die for. To be a part of the Cullen family is the

best thing that could possibly happen to you. The fact that Bella is the only constant anti-hero in the saga also suggests a rather sinister point of view. Because we have already established that Bella can be read as “any” woman, we may draw the conclusion that to become a part of this transcended group, women have to die. In the bodies they are born with, and no matter how smart they are, they are not good enough for that life before they are transformed. Feminists will argue, too, that women in *Twilight* can only be changed through a man, because it is men that do all of the “turning” in *Twilight*. I will not argue against this argument, because it follows the same direction as my own argument. Women are not good enough, in the eyes of Mormons.

Bella, however, is resurrected as a vampire, and supposedly becomes equal to Edward. She is just as strong as he is, and initially just as fast. She can’t read minds, but she can project a shield that saves the Cullens and their allies from the Volturi. But are they now equal?

We explored in the Third Face of the Vampire how the Cullens might be read as Mormons, and also how the female members of that clan does not sparkle equally much as the men. Although, at the time, I didn’t really put Bella in the same category as the rest of the female members, and that was because I (knowingly) skipped one important aspect: motherhood. The Mormons put a strong emphasis on the woman as a mother. “It was not only that a man would make me complete, but that I needed one in order to become a mother” (Dietz 107). In *Twilight* this is taken a step further. In the case of Carlisle and Esme, none of the children can actually say that Esme had anything to do with their vampiric births, whereas Carlisle was instrumental to several of them. In addition, none of the women may have children. Rosalie really wants one, but she can never have one, because her body isn’t changing. The only way Bella had one was because she got pregnant while still human.

There are two things that are evident from Bella’s pregnancy.

First, that it was obviously very important that Bella should have a child with Edward. We may speculate in why that is, but we may also offer a couple of thoughts. One, that a marriage is only truly fulfilled when you have a child, and two, Bella could only be seen as a proper woman when she had at least one child.

Second, the male is superior to the women in this department as well. They can have children despite being vampires. Not only can women never be equal to men, but they can’t ever have children either. What this suggests is that should women become equal to men in

physical strength, and respect, they will lose what makes them women, and they will become sexless, and even then they won't be good enough.

3 The Girl Who Triumphed

The fairy tale is a big part of the modern romance, where the point of the ending is that the two main characters find each other, and marry in the end. As such, the romance is much criticised for giving the message that a woman is nothing without the man, and that the greatest a woman should hope for in life is to marry, and possibly have children. I have argued that this can be true only on the surface of the *Twilight Saga* because of some of the boundaries placed upon the book by the genre. Much of it is therefore rebuked because the structure of the romance demands that there is a great obstacle for the two main characters to be together, and that *they* find a way to circumvent this obstacle, and everything is not up to the man.

That the vampire is such a lustful character, and brings with it the traditions of the vampire of being a blood sucking demon only heightens the drama, and as such fits perfectly into the romance. Although one cannot deny the abusing aspect of their relationship, one may understand the lack of condemnation in the book on the grounds that his actions are based on the need to control his own needs and wants. Because of these things and the fact that Bella chose marriage and is just as powerful as her man at the end of the four books – the *Twilight Saga* does not say that women belong in the home as subordinate to their men.

The vampire's three faces – the first having already been taken up – not only show the complexity of the vampire, but more specifically show the complexity of the vampire in this particular romance. It is through how we are made to feel like we belong with the vampires and not the humans, and how we are made to long for what they have, and to be as perfect, that we can say they symbolise the fear of never being good enough. The woman is especially targeted in the *Twilight Saga*. That Bella is easy to identify with for many, and because of the link to the fairy tale and because of the “good girl” behaviour, one can read into these novels that women in particular should want to be like these vampires.

Bella does become like them, and find that she is just as powerful as they are, but in return, she has to give up the biological traits that make her into a woman. Her natural appearance is changed into the deathly pale of the vampire. She can no longer have children, and will obviously not menstruate any longer. Not to mention she has to give up her life. That a woman has to give up one of the most defining traits of what it is to be a woman – to

become just as strong as the men —, is what makes this story criticise a patriarchal society. That the vampires, in the Third Face of the Vampire, can be clearly read as being Mormon, where the men outshines the women despite their sacrifice, is what makes this story criticise the patriarchal Mormon society, no matter if Meyer hides behind her unconscious meaning. The Girl Who Triumphed is therefore an ironic title, because although she gained equality with her man at the end of the novel, and shines perhaps even brighter, she had to give up her life to become perfect, and *no one* can follow her into perfection.

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